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FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3795
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000124

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DEPARTMENT FOR ISN, NEA, IO, AND EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/12/2017
TAGS: [AORC](#) [BX](#) [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [TRGY](#) [UNSC](#)
SUBJECT: BRUNEIAN AMBASSADOR ATTENDED NATANZ OPENING
BECAUSE CONTRARY INSTRUCTIONS DID NOT ARRIVE IN TIME

REF: A. (A) BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 121

[1](#)B. (B) SECSTATE 45880

[1](#)C. (C) 06 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 167

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EMIL SKODON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador encountered Pengiran Ali Hashim, Director for Bilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, at a social event the evening of April 10 and asked if Brunei's Ambassador in Teheran had attended the previous day's ribbon-cutting at the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) following Embassy demarche on this subject (ref A). An embarrassed Ali Hashim responded that the Bruneian Ambassador had in fact gone to Natanz even though MFAT leadership had decided that he should not, because instructions to that effect did not reach him in time.

[1](#)2. (C) Ali Hashim explained that following his receipt of our demarche at OOB on April 9 he raised our approach with Foreign Minister II Pehin Lim. Lim agreed that the Bruneian Ambassador should not attend the ribbon-cutting and directed Ali Hashim to cable instructions to that effect. Ali Hashim did so, but given that the ceremony was scheduled for later that day decided to phone the Bruneian Ambassador and warn him that instructions were coming (Teheran is five hours behind Bandar Seri Begawan). He finally reached the Ambassador on his cell phone, only to learn that he was already at the Iranian Foreign Ministry waiting to board a bus that the ministry had arranged to take members of the diplomatic corps on the four-hour drive to Natanz. The Bruneian Ambassador felt it was too late for him to back out and so, with Ali Hashim's reluctant acquiescence, boarded the bus, rode to Natanz, and attended the FEP ribbon-cutting.

[1](#)3. (C) Ali Hashim told Ambassador Skodon that he had told Brunei's Ambassador in Teheran to make clear to all and sundry that he was in Natanz only as an observer of Iranian developments and his presence did not signal any support for Teheran's work on nuclear enrichment. Ambassador expressed disappointment that Brunei was represented at Natanz, especially since it had made clear its commitment to support UNSC resolutions regarding Teheran's nuclear program, and stressed the need to avoid any steps that the Iranians might mistakenly interpret as support for their defiance of the UNSC.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The silver lining in this unfortunate episode is that MFAT leadership apparently remains willing to respond to our cautions about inadvertently displaying support for Teheran's covert nuclear weapons program, as it did last year when the Sultan sidestepped an invitation to visit Iran following our intervention (ref C).
SKODON